



NYPIRG's

## **Straphangers Campaign**

# The End of MTA Student MetroCards?

## the facts

The MTA is facing a nearly \$400 million deficit in 2010. In response, it is recommending drastic cuts in service and a horrendous proposal to end student MetroCards!

Most of the MTA's deficit is not of its own making. The Straphangers Campaign believes that the State and City should pick up more of the costs of moving school children, as localities now do all around the state. So we look to the leadership of Governor Paterson and Mayor Bloomberg. (See questions and answers on student MetroCards on back.)

The Straphangers Campaign is encouraged by the growing opposition to these harsh measures, including the leadership in the City Council and riders, parents, educators and students.

The MTA will hold hearings on these cuts during the first week of March. And there will be many opportunities to weigh in, whether by e-mail, text, phone, letter, protest or testimony.

Like you, we are angry that we have to fight this battle, but we are determined to maintain service and insure that New York school children have student MetroCards to take advantage of learning, culture, sports and the life of the city.

## **TAKE ACTION NOW!**

- Sign the City Council/Straphangers Campaign petition at <http://bit.ly/transitpetition>.
- Contact Governor Paterson and Mayor Bloomberg. Tell them how much transit service means to you at <http://bit.ly/NYSGovernor> and <http://bit.ly/NYCMayor>.
- Call the MTA at (212) 878-7483. Urge them to find alternate ways to stop these cuts.
- Speak at the upcoming MTA Public Hearings - <http://bit.ly/hearingschedule>.

Here are some questions and answers on student MetroCards:

**Who is eligible?** In grades 3 through 6, pupils are eligible for free-fare if they reside one mile or more from their school. They receive half-fare on surface transportation if they reside one half mile and less than one mile from school. In grades 7 through 12, students are eligible for free-fare on public transit if they reside 1 ½ miles or more from their school. They are eligible for half-fare surface transportation if they reside one half mile and less than 1 ½ miles from school.

**How much would it cost families per child for a school year if there were no student MetroCards?** It would range from about \$343 for each half-fare child to as much as \$890 a year for a free-fare student. (These numbers are calculated as follows: For the half-fare MetroCard - an average discounted fare of \$1.91 multiplied by 180 school days equals \$343. For the free-fare MetroCards, ten 30-day unlimited-ride MetroCards at \$89 each would cost \$890 for a school year. This would be necessary for children with extracurricular activities and whose families could afford it. Current student MetroCards are good for three trips daily.)

**What's the history of State and City support for student MetroCards?** As follows, according to the New York City Independent Budget Office:

“The City of New York has subsidized student travel on the city’s buses and subways since the 1940s. Faced with a budgetary crisis in 1995, Mayor Giuliani proposed to eliminate the city’s \$59 million annual contribution to the MTA for reduced fare and free fare student passes. In 1995, the city was paying \$128 million per year. However, the state reimbursed the city for around \$69 million of this expense, leaving a net cost to the city of only \$59 million.

In response to public opposition, the city later decided to reduce its subsidy to \$45 million rather than eliminate it entirely. The subsidy was channeled through the Board of Education, and has remained at \$45 million since 1995...

The legal requirement for school fares appears to be provisions in State law that stipulate that NYC Transit and MABSTOA are to provide reduced fares to specific classes of passengers at the request of the mayor. In turn, the city is supposed to reimburse NYC Transit for the lost revenue. The current arrangement does not follow these guidelines, but is an (informal?) agreement under which the city and state each contribute \$45 million, and the MTA absorbs the remaining costs.”

(NOTE: The State of New York had cut its \$45 million to \$6 million, but has recently restored \$19 million, for a total of \$25 million.)

**What does it cost to provide student MetroCards?** The MTA says it cost \$214 million a year. The agency is now only receiving \$70 million in state and city support for student MetroCards.

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